

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2009

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-309, The Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Wolf:

We write to express our strong support for FY 2010 full funding for the Second Chance Act. In 2007, federal and state prisons held just under 1.6 million inmates – one in every 198 U.S. residents – and released 725,000 individuals back to our communities. Unfortunately, most individuals face numerous challenges when returning to the community from prison, and research indicates that over half return to prison within three years of their release. The Second Chance Act is a common sense, evidence-based approach to improving public safety.

These grants will provide crucial resources at a time when they are desperately needed.

- Between 1995 and 2005, West Virginia had the second fastest growing prison population in the nation. From 2000 to 2005, the number of prisoners released from custody of the West Virginia Department of Corrections increased by 68.8 percent, from 1,336 inmates released in 2000 to 2,157 in 2005. More than half lack a high school diploma. Sixty percent have children.
- More than 10,000 individuals are released from Virginia state prisons every year. Almost one in five has been diagnosed with a medical illness, and 76 percent have a history of substance use disorders. One in ten has no employment history, and more than half have not graduated from high school.

Though individuals face many challenges when they return from prison or jail to the community, research confirms that comprehensive, coordinated services can help formerly incarcerated individuals find stable employment and housing, thereby reducing recidivism.


- In Illinois, the Safer Foundation's Transitional Employment Program provides career planning training, job coaches, job search training and activities, and replacement and retention services. Compared to all individuals released from Illinois prisons, recidivism is 61 percent lower among clients who complete the program.
- In New York, La Bodega de la Familia provided a range of services to individuals with substance use disorders involved with the criminal justice or family court systems and their families, including walk-in services, 24-hour crisis intervention, and family case management. A 2002 evaluation found that Bodega participants were significantly less likely to use any illegal drug than the comparison group, and were less likely to be arrested and convicted within six months of release.
- In Maryland, a coalition of service providers came together in 1999 to form the Maryland Reentry Partnership Initiative (REP), which coordinates efforts to provide prisoners returning to select Baltimore neighborhoods with comprehensive reentry services. A 2007 evaluation found that REP clients committed fewer crimes during the study period than ex-prisoners in the comparison group.
- The Kansas Department of Corrections implemented a pilot program in one of its facilities that targeted certain high-risk individuals whose criminogenic needs were linked to substance abuse or mental health needs. The results are promising: 32 percent of participants released to parole returned to prison within

two years of successfully completing the program, compared to 82 percent of those who did not participate in the program.

The Second Chance Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law in April 2008, authorizes \$165 million for programs that will improve coordination of reentry services and policies at the state and local levels. The Second Chance Act includes a \$55 million program for Adult and Juvenile Offender State and Local Reentry Demonstration Projects, which improve coordination of reentry initiatives and implement evidence-based practices. The Second Chance Act also authorizes a \$15 million program for Mentoring Grants to Nonprofit Organizations, which provide mentoring and other transitional services to adult and juvenile offenders reentering the community.

State and local governments and nonprofit organizations around the country are eager to launch innovative reentry programs, and families and communities are desperate to access the services the Second Chance Act will provide. Please support FY 2010 full funding for the Second Chance Act..

Sincerely,



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Bobby C. Scott
Member of Congress



F. James Sensenbrenner Jr.
Member of Congress



Howard Coble
Member of Congress